Q: I’m considering solar for my home/business* – where should I start?

A: Check out our customer fact sheet, where we introduce you to the way solar works, the potential benefits, things to look out for, and where we provide advice for continuing your solar journey.

Q: Does Colorado Springs Utilities pay a rebate for solar?

A: Yes! Although the 30% Federal Tax Credit is still the largest incentive to go solar, Utilities pays a helpful rebate to qualifying customers, based on the system size.

Q: My monitoring system says I produced 1,000kWh this billing period, but my bill says that only 300kWh were received by Utilities. Am I not getting credit for all my production?

A: Remember that your home uses energy directly, before any energy reaches the Billing Meter. You can trust your monitoring system and your bill. Let’s say you produced a total of 1,000kWh this billing period and sent back 300kWh. That means your home used 700kWh directly. Let’s also say that your bill indicates you used 200kWh from the grid this billing period. This means your home used 900kWh total (700 solar kWh and 200 grid kWh) this billing period. Since your solar produced 1,000kWh and your home only used 900kWh, you’ll contribute 100kWh to your credit bank this month. Nice work!

Q: What is Net Metering and how does it work?

A: Net Metering is a program that allows our customers to “bank” unused solar generation on the grid until a time when your home’s energy usage is greater than your solar production. This allows net daytime generation to be used at night, and net summer excess to be used during the winter months.

Some of the solar energy produced by your system is used directly by your home (appliances, lighting, vehicle charging, etc.). During some periods, your solar production is greater than your home’s use. At these times, that excess energy, above and beyond what the home can use, gets sent back, through the Billing (“Net”) Meter, to the grid. The excess energy sent back, or “Received” by the utility is tracked on Register 10 of your Net Meter.

At other times, your home needs more energy than your solar can produce. At these times, your home uses energy from the grid (it might use both solar energy and energy from the grid, or only energy from the grid, depending on what is available). The energy your home uses from the grid is tracked on Register 11 of your Net Meter.

Both register 10 and 11 only count upward. The difference between reads equals the total energy used from the grid and received by the grid. Your Register 10 (Total Received by the Grid) is then subtracted from your Register 11 (Total Used from the Grid) to get your net usage for the billing period. If your net usage is a positive number, you’ll need to pay a bill on that amount. If your net usage is a negative number, you’ll bank that amount as a credit, to roll forward into future billing periods. In the next billing period, you might add to your credit bank, or use energy from your credit bank, depending on how much energy your solar produces and how much energy your home uses.

If you size your system to produce 100% of your annual energy needs, the high production months (long days) will produce enough credits to carry forward and cover your usage during the low production months (short days).
Q: Does Colorado Springs Utilities pay me for my excess credits, or do I get to roll my credits over continuously?
A: You have the option to do either. Cashing out your credits at the end of the calendar year is the default. With this option, you’ll receive compensation at Utilities’ avoided cost of energy – about 20% of retail value. This compensation will come in the form of a bill credit on your first bill of the new year. The bill credit applies to your total, four-service bill, should you have enough credits, not only to the electric portion. By cashing out your credit bank, you will have no credit to support your winter usage. Remember that a kWh used is more valuable than a kWh that you cash out. For this reason, we offer the option for customers to continuously rollover their credit bank. If you choose the rollover option, you won’t be able to cash out your credits in the future, but you’ll ensure that you get the most value out of the energy you produce with your solar.

Q: How do I read my Net Metering bill?
A: Remember that your first Net Metering bill might include usage from your old Billing Meter. We have created a good resource to help you decipher your bill, which can be found here.

Q: My solar is on and producing energy, but I never see any kWh show up as Received by Utilities on my bill. Am I receiving credit for my production?
A: Yes, but you have a lot of energy usage which directly uses all the energy your solar produces. Multiply your total system production over a billing period by your energy usage rate. This is the amount you avoided in your electric bill for that billing period.

Q: Why do I see a difference between my solar monitoring and the Utilities Production Meter?
A: Your monitoring system tracks all the production output from your solar system, including any energy produced during system testing. The Utilities’ Production Meter only tracks energy produced by your system from your interconnection date, forward. If you see a growing discrepancy between your system monitoring and the Production Meter, it may derive from electric line losses over distance. Your monitoring system measures output at the source of generation, but the Production Meter is often farther away, located next to the load center (main panel) and billing meter. Electric flow becomes less efficient on hot days, due to increased resistance, so you might see the difference between your monitoring system and Production meter readings ebb and flow over time.

Q: I am a solar installer, or I would like to install my own solar. How do I get the process started?
A: We have a process sheet located here to help guide you.

*For the purposes of this FAQ, we use “home” to denote a home/business/building/property/premise that uses electricity.*